Interview with Edward R. Dudley Jr.

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

AMBASSADOR EDWARD R. DUDLEY JR.

Interviewed by: Michael L. Krenn

Initial interview date: January 15, 1995

This is an interview being conducted with the Honorable Edward R. Dudley, January 15, 1995, at his residence in North Miami Beach, Florida.

Q: Let's go right to 1948. You were working on the legal staff of the NAACP at that time?

DUDLEY: That's quite right. Thurgood Marshall was the Chief Counsel and I was his assistant.

Q: During that same year you were chosen to become US minister to Liberia. How did that come about; and, I guess, the other question, were you surprised that it came about?

DUDLEY: Well, I had had a number of jobs in city government in New York. And then I worked with the NAACP and we had a Washington office. The NAACP at that time was rather well known because it was dealing with discrimination throughout the United States, primarily in the Southern states—that's where most of our law work was. So, our organization was pretty well known, and so was Thurgood, who was the chief counsel. And I suppose they were looking around for someone to replace whoever was in the Foreign Service in Africa at that time, and they sort of hit on me. I made no effort to get the

post. In fact, I didn't even know it existed. When I looked into it, it sounded interesting. My wife and I said, “Well, let's give it a try.”

Q: That was, in some ways, sort of a chancy decision for you. Nineteen-forty-eight was a year in which everyone predicted that Truman was going to go down to defeat. It looked like it might be a pretty short-term job.

DUDLEY: Right. That's what we said; we'll go over and have a vacation and then we'll come back after the elections. That's exactly right. But then we stayed five years, as you know.

Q: In some of the articles that I read about your appointment there were some rumors that instead of Liberia you might be chosen to go to an Iron Curtain country. Was that ever raised with you?

DUDLEY: Never with me, no. I'm sure that it was discussed in the State Department since they had to fill those spots as well, but the only spot that they talked to me about was Liberia, at that time. Because I don't think blacks had advanced too far in the State Department, or anywhere else, and Africa was a black continent and Liberia was a black country so they had no problems with assigning one of our people to that spot.

Q: In the State Department guides Liberia was traditionally described as a “hardship” post. Did you have any nervousness about taking your wife, and I think your son was six or seven at that time, over there?

DUDLEY: No, not at all, because we had known about Liberia through the missionaries at our church and whatnot. It was a civilized area. We knew it was a hardship post. In fact, a hardship post in the State Department carried an additional 10% stipend. We didn't lose any sleep over that, not at all. In fact, when we got over there and met the people in power—President Tubman and his cabinet, and all of the people—there were others who had been there—we found it very interesting. It wasn't a hardship post at all. We did a few

things ourselves—building areas for the staff that came on. But, we got a chance to move out in Africa, visiting other places. In fact, on one occasion, I went all the way to South Africa, and South Africa was very controversial in those days. So, I think we spent four or five years over there, altogether, and built up a good mission. By that, I mean we brought interesting people in to serve in the black area. By doing that we also had a listening post for adjacent countries around, not only Liberia. We picked up information all around, so I think we did a credible job for the State Department at that time.

Q: What were you first impressions when you arrived at the American legation there in Monrovia? I've seen some reports from earlier years—the 1930s and "40s—where some visitors to the legation reported that morale seemed to be pretty low. That many of the employees that were there seemed to feel that it was a dead-end, career-wise, to be assigned to Monrovia. What did you find when you got there in 1948?

DUDLEY: I didn't get that impression at all, although some may have felt that because there weren't many blacks in the State Department anywhere. And this is true. They were immediately assigned to Liberia. Of course, over the period of time we were there we got them transferred to European posts and all over. I didn't feel that the people that I met there were too uncomfortable. Number one, they were happy to have a job. Number two, they were glad to be in the State Department, and, number two, that in itself was breaking ground. So that impression didn't hit me. We used that as a base, and my own expertise as it had developed working with people in the State Department, to get these people moved out, at least as I indicated before. And we had quite a mission. And we had quite a bit of help from the State Department in building quarters for the staff and that sort of thing. So, it worked out very well over that five-year period.

Q: Yes, I came across that quite a bit in the State Department material of you requesting improvements and so forth. And sometimes grudgingly, but eventually they did give in on a number of those things.

DUDLEY: Yes, they did.

Q: When you arrived in Liberia in 1948 what were you told and what did you perceive as the basic US interests in Liberia and the basic problems that we might have with Liberia?

DUDLEY: First of all, we decided that we were in no hurry, so we took a ship to go to Liberia. And it took many, many days before we got there. And we were welcomed by the staff who were there. Our first impression was that there was American interests there—business interests. I think we talked about this before. The Liberian Mining Company. Many of the things that were being done there were spearheaded by American entrepreneurs, and therefore the character of the embassy itself took on greater importance. Because we had persons who were writing reports on different phases of life there and this kept them very busy. Quite often they would come into the embassy to see us with respect to setting up appointments with the president. This is a small, tightly-knit country, and one man ran it. There wasn't too much underneath. Underneath, the lieutenants were there, but they couldn't make decisions. Decisions were made at the top, and the closer you could get to the top, the better off the business people were. This was the biggest thing that we had to do—representing American interests. And it succeeded. We found the president to be a very affable man. Those of us in the foreign service, and other countries as well, set up appointments with him, once a week or twice a month or whatever, and we would go and sit down and chat about the various interests. He had interests and we had interests, and that's the way it worked.

Q: Let me ask a question about your reception from the Liberian government. You said you got on very well with President Tubman. Once again, some of the State Department materials that I went through from the 1930s and 1940s and so forth seemed to indicate that some of the previous US representatives felt that there was a resentment on the part of the Liberians that only blacks were being assigned as the head of the US mission to Liberia. Did you notice any of that when you were there?

DUDLEY: I did not, no. In fact, most of the Liberians were happy to have the black fellows there. They felt closer to them. And on the other hand, there was white business there—Firestone itself had one of the largest businesses in Africa. Thousands of acres of rubber trees that they were managing and getting latex to send back. So, you had all kinds of groups there. And it merged right in, and we didn't seem to have any problem.

Q: In general, when you arrived there in 1948, what were your first impressions of Liberia and its people?

DUDLEY: I wasn't surprised, because I had read about it and had been thoroughly briefed in the State Department and talked to people who had been there, and my impression probably was that here was a group of people trying to get along in that part of Africa—one of the few independent countries in Africa; the first independent, Liberia turned out to be—and we had to work with them. We found in the government itself some very competent, qualified people. Some of the heads of departments there had been to Hampton and universities in America. Steve Tolbert and some of the others who we met right away, had a working knowledge of the United States. So, I wasn't surprised, because much of this I knew, having been briefed thoroughly before coming there, and so we fell right into it. We had to work in the embassy there, and then you make the rounds of the other groups. Right below us was the British minister, and some of the others from other parts of Europe. It was a very delightful assignment. A hardworking one, because we really got out into the countryside and roughed it. We were out in the heart of Africa, places where roads were just like this, up and down. We got our car and we had our chauffeur and that sort of thing, but it was no picnic moving around in a country such as that.

Q: In 1949 the US mission was raised to embassy level and you were made...

DUDLEY: From a minister to an ambassador, that's right. That's the first time that had happened in Africa.

Q: Right, and you were the first black American ambassador in US history.

DUDLEY: Right.

Q: Were you surprised by that development at all?

DUDLEY: No. I think we did a lot to push it. I had some very able staff people. One chap in particular, a brilliant boy, whose name was Rupert Lloyd. And Rupert Lloyd was the first assistant, so to speak. These fellows knew how to push, and what to push, and what buttons to push—they'd been there some time—and I would say they deserve a lot of credit for how they ended the...The legation moved on; it was the legation at that time. Because every time it moved up a step, it helped them, salary-wise, in particular. So, it was a normal progression, you might say.

Q: One thing I guess that I was surprised at... I did find an article in Ebony about the raising of the embassy and yourself being made the first black US ambassador, but in general was this seen by yourself and other black Americans as a monumental step?

DUDLEY: No, not at all. It was just a step along the way. Most of us, probably, who were involved in it sort of looked at it as a step in your own career, not as any monumental thing. We didn't consider that. I don't think the question ever came up—how many people do we have in Europe, who's assigned where and whatnot. At that time, that phase of it was not significant. The significant part was that you have a personal title and maybe a little more money and so on and so forth. You weren't thinking about groundbreaking, even though it was. It never even dawned on me that I was the first black ambassador. Those things come on later. Even now, people are talking about it. So, at that time, not at all; we were just another one. In fact, I'm not sure that we even knew that—we had countries all over the world—not sure at all.

Q: Your talking about the roads leads into one of the questions I had. One of the programs that you and your staff seemed to push very, very hard for when you were in Liberia

was Point 4 and other economic assistance to Liberia. First, was it difficult to get? And then second, how successful do you think you were in terms of getting economic aid for Liberia?

DUDLEY: We were very successful, because, here again, Liberia was the State Department's jewel in all of Africa. It was also well known from a business point of view, simply because Firestone—which was a huge American business—had a major stake in it. And so when we began to talk about this, it was no strange subject at all. It wasn't too difficult to get them to give us what we wanted. So, we knew that the Point 4 program was in essence moving throughout the world, and we put in our two-cents and they gave us everything we needed. It probably doubled the staff that we had there. Here you have a group of business people, so to speak, working on roads, buildings, whatever they were doing, but still they were under the Embassy. This was just one phase of the Point 4 establishment.

Q: I found one document that said—I didn't find anything else about this—that you were Chairman of the American Committee on Point 4 Development in Africa. Was that a more wide ranging program?

DUDLEY: Not to my knowledge, not to my knowledge. We do know that they had some things going on in other provinces of Africa, but nothing that called on me to make any visits there. We were the headquarters, no doubt about it, because we were the first and had the largest input in this Point 4 thing. Probably Liberia needed more at that particular time. They got a lot of help from our State Department in these areas here. We had people coming over who were experts in different fields; any number of experts were coming over. And Point 4 encompassed much more than road building. There were a number of things that they were successful at, and the embassy was simply another place for them to hang their hat. But we had Under Secretaries, and three or four different departments in the embassy. We had a pretty large staff, and a huge building that we were instrumental in getting going at the time, right on the banks of the ocean. It was a beautiful place.

Q: Yes, I saw one very small picture in one of the articles.

DUDLEY: Then during that time we had, on what we called the embassy compound, which was more than a quarter of an acre all around there—houses built to house these people. Because there were no hotels or anything like that. We had to put our own housing up. And we were very successful with that. We had all kinds of crews that came over to do that. It was a major operation, and far more important than it would be perceived today for a small country. Because we were a small country. We had an operation that you would probably find in any major country in the world. And I suppose there was justification for it, because Americans were taking out diamonds and gold. And the Liberian government was very free with the technical assistance that was coming in there, because they got their share out of it, and it worked for everybody.

Q: You said earlier that your relationship with President Tubman was very good.

DUDLEY: It was very good.

Q: I came across some correspondence in the NAACP files, however, that seemed to indicate that that often put you at odds with people like Walter White. The one main affair that they seemed to cite was the Twe affair, T-w-e was the name of the individual in Liberia, someone who I suppose Tubman was trying to have arrested or something. And they complained about his one-man rule in Liberia. Do you think those criticisms were fair, or was that basically what was needed?

DUDLEY: There was some fairness to them, but there was nothing that they could do about it. Any number of countries had kind of a one-man rule—at that time—and I think I probably told Walter to let up on this thing, because there was nothing they could do and it made it worse for us over there. Because, here you have a dictator say, whose running the operation, and he's not going to brook any interference within his own country. He doesn't give a darn, because he holds all the cards. He's the one who lets the Americans in to

do business. Americans are banging the door down to come in and work on lumber and diamond mines and so forth and so on. So that was just a passing phase with respect to any objections that the NAACP might have had and whatnot. And I would say that they didn't have all the information that I had. Not that they didn't do a good job, because I worked for them for five years with Thurgood in the legal department, and they did. But a lot of things like this, you can make observation about but you can't even dent, because you have no authority. You can't take them to court. They're independent people and they don't give a darn about what you think, and you can't change it. In time, the local people there were able, as politics moved up, they were able to change it. But the outside criticism, as I recall, was like water falling off a log. Particularly with a man like Tubman, who was a strong kind of fellow, and probably resented this outside interference. He was so strong in this area that there was no local group that could dent it. If the election was held—and they didn't have any elections—he would win it anyway. Tubman and his cabinet—he used to call them his “crowd of boys”, those that he would put in office here, here, here, heads of the various departments, those were his “crowd of boys”. Outsiders, they would laugh at, they would criticize them. But we spent all our time trying to get along with them, so we could further our aims and objectives.

Q: I found a number of documents in the libraries and archives about visitors to Liberia; black Americans such as Claude Barnett—I believe he came in 1950, and so forth. Generally speaking, do you think black Americans in the late-1940s, 1950s, were very interested in foreign policy; very informed about foreign policy?

DUDLEY: No, I don't. But there were some individuals who, as you pointed out, would make trips. And they would be well received. We had some artists come in there, and they would be well received. But I don't think there were any tree-shakers. During that period of time, you couldn't change anything.

Q: Of course, your stay in Liberia coincided with the heating up of the Cold War. During your time in Liberia were either communism or anti-American nationalism—were either of those two things really much of a problem for US interests in Liberia?

DUDLEY: Not at all. In America they were making a lot of noise and kicking up. They wouldn't be in Liberia for the simple reason that Liberia—the government—was run with an iron hand. The man in charge—Tubman—wouldn't permit any of that. At the drop of a hat, he would cut it off. And he would use tactics probably that we wouldn't use; it would be illegal in our country. So there was nothing...there was criticism from the outside of how the government would be run, but there wasn't anything inside stirring up the people, because they wouldn't stand for it. You must realize that this was a dictatorship in Liberia at the time that I was there. Whoever was running the government and happened to be there at the time, he could do whatever he wanted to do. And they did. But it didn't interfere with us. We were able to protect our people who were there making a living, in lumber and this, that, and the other. Again, as I said, the Firestone people, and whatnot. Part of my job was once a week, when the head of Firestone would meet with the President, I would meet...the three of us would meet there. And there were many lesser American business people who would come and not even get a chance to see the President, but who would happen to see the various offices and departments that they were interested in. Tubman was very fond of many Americans. We had a black doctor there by the name of John West. He was Tubman's own physician, and West could do no wrong. He had individuals like that. But everything came from the top; that's where the power was in the country. You had a legislature and everything else there, but when you get through it and settle down, it was what the bossman said. And that was William V.S. Tubman—Shadrack(?) Tubman. And I had a lot of respect for him, because he was a strong man and basically he would use his strength and knowledge and so forth on behalf of his people. Of course, he looked out after number one. For example, if the Americans were there and discovered a rich ore of some kind, he'd get his cut, he'd have his share and whatnot. Unlike in America where you couldn't do anything like that. But, they did all

right. And I couldn't criticize him because he took care of everybody, all of his people. It was just, “Do as I say, and you'll get along all right.” And people got along all right. He built the schools for the kids, so forth and so on. But he wouldn't brook any interference. He was a tough man.

Q: Let me ask this about the Liberians. Were they very aware of or very interested in US racial problems, civil rights problems here in this country?

DUDLEY: They were very knowledgeable. I don't know if they were very interested. They were knowledgeable because they were critical. Every once in while in talking to you they'd pull your leg and whatnot: “How long are you going to stand for it,” and so forth and so on. Oh, they were very knowledgeable about it. Because many of them had been to America to get an education, and they had suffered some of these same things. Oh, yes, they were vocal; very much so. But they were sitting back in the catbird's seat. They have their own country, they have their own black president, and so forth and so on, and they didn't hesitate to speak their mind. But there was no interference; there was nothing they could do. But a lot of the criticism was caustic, because they had been there and many of them went to school there. They themselves had been the recipients of some of this backhanded stuff, race and whatnot. That's why they would bring it up to you. Here you are, you're the American ambassador, and they would jokingly say certain off-color things to you about it to see what you would say. “Why don't you straighten out things over here in your country?”; things like that.

Q: But do you think that US racial problems and civil rights problems had any impact on the carrying out of foreign policy in areas like Africa, Asia...

DUDLEY: I don't think it did anything at all. Because if you're in Africa you're dealing with people who didn't have this problem; Africans in their own country. It was just a different kettle of fish. Oh, everybody knew about it, and they would “tweak” you about, you know. But, I don't think so.

Q: I found a number of documents, especially in your papers that are at the Amistad Research Center in New Orleans, about the years 1950 and 1951, because there seemed to be a lot of discussion about a possible transfer for you. It seemed in your messages back to the State Department that you had set up most of the programs that you wanted to do and they could go on by themselves. There were a number of suggestions that seemed to be raised: once again, going to an Iron Curtain country; possibly Central America, the Caribbean; maybe Haiti or the Dominican Republic; and there were even some talks about sending you to the Far East, somewhere like Burma. Were you amenable to these kinds of transfers? Did you want to continue in foreign service after Liberia?

DUDLEY: It had not advanced far enough for me to even put any hope into it at that time. My own feeling was that I should come back here and get involved again with Thurgood and the law department; work that I had been doing. And I had left the NAACP once before and I think as I mentioned to you, Thurgood said, “How long are you going to stay this time?”, the last time I came back. Because each time I'd go he'd have to have somebody take my place. But I had been for so many years the first assistant that there wasn't any question about my coming back. Walter White, who was head of the NAACP, he was for it, but Thurgood was always pulling my leg about it. I guess he didn't want me to get away. I was a workhorse in there. He was the head man, and we did a lot of things. We tried cases down in South Carolina and Georgia, and we were in Texas, toured NAACP branches and whatnot. And this was a very shaky period in our history, when there was complete segregation. And therefore a lot of the things we were doing were borderline things and in some cases dangerous. Because certain people were run out of certain areas. But despite all that, I was anxious to come back and pick up where I'd left off, and after a certain period of time I did, I came on back. But I don't recall that I was even offered another post or that I requested one. In my mind, that consideration didn't come up. I realized, I think, all along that this was a stepping-stone for my career, and that's all it turned out to be.

Q: So, rather than a transfer, you would probably be thinking of just getting back home and getting back to your work.

DUDLEY: That's right. Because our son was getting larger and we had school problems with him and so on. So, we just decided that was it.

Q: You left Liberia in 1953 when the Eisenhower administration came in. Just as sort of a summary of your service there, in 1953 when you left what would you consider to be your greatest accomplishments of your tenure in Liberia?

DUDLEY: Well, I think probably it was enlarging the American embassy there to a point where it was a real going operation. When I went there it was almost a one-man show. You had a secretary and so forth and so on. But over a period of time we were able to bring in so-called sub-department heads and whatnot, and enlarge it and build a new building and so forth. And we had a good listening post for the State Department throughout Africa, in Liberia. I think that was an accomplishment that I look at as being in good hands when I left.

Q: Did you have any significant regrets when you left in 1953, anything that you thought you should have done?

DUDLEY: I don't think so, because I knew that I had to get on with my life. And I was very young in those days, when I was over there.

Q: Right. You were only, what, 37 or 38?

DUDLEY: Something like that. So I had to get on with whatever I was going to do. And as I said, our son needed an education. His mother had been teaching him with another little boy in a little school. And it was now time to move on. Whether it was Republicans or Democrats didn't really make any difference to me; who was in power. Because it was not our intention to make the Foreign Service our career. This was an opportunity to put

something on your record and to do something that you'd never had an opportunity to do, and I was lucky in that respect and appreciated it. But here again, our office was back there; my former employers were back there, so I went back and joined them and went on with my life.

Q: Well, one last question about your service in Liberia, and then if we have time just a couple of questions about your activities after 1953. While you were in Liberia, a number of visitors sent memos back to the State Department—you sent a couple yourself—about the whole issue of trying to get more blacks into the State Department. First question, do you think the Truman administration did enough to encourage that; did it appoint enough people; did it try to get more blacks into the State Department? How good a job do you think it did it in trying to do that?

DUDLEY: I really don't know, because being out in the field, except for those that they would send to me, I don't know what they did in other areas of the world. You have in the State Department, cut up by regions, and you have the African Desk and you have this and South America and so forth and so on, those of us out in the field had very little knowledge either of the requirements or what was being done in these other areas of the world. I don't have much that I can add to that, at this particular time.

Q: Were you disappointed that during the entire Truman years you were the only black American who was appointed to be a chief of mission?

DUDLEY: I don't think so, because the climate of that time was that anyone who was appointed, who was black, would probably go to a black country, which I did in the past. And we had not advanced enough in our own culture. So, other than probably my general disappointment about the slowness in which this was eradicated, I would not say that there was any particular disappointment at that time. Because, I was too knowledgeable about Washington and what it would do and what it would not do. And getting a foot in the door, if you were black, was not an easy thing in those days. And here I had gone over to

minister, and they had put me up as an ambassador, so it looks like we had broken some ice, and we had to go from there. We had to continue the fight here, because segregation, discrimination were very rampant throughout America. So it wasn't so much a question of who was going to do it on the foreign field. In my case, I just picked up where I left off, four years previous. We were filing cases all over the South to get things straightened out, and that's what I did.

Q: Just a couple of questions about some more points of contact with the State Department after you left Liberia in 1953. According to some records I found in the Kennedy Library, in 1960 you were selected as a consultant to Kennedy's Africa Task Force. I guess after he was elected he wanted some advice on Africa. Do you have any memories of that?

DUDLEY: I do not. No, I don't think much came of it.

Q: That raises another question I wanted to ask you earlier. Do you think the United States has ever really given the attention that it should to Africa, either during that time or during the early-1960s that we're talking about.

DUDLEY: I would think so. Because the United States interest in any continent, or the countries in that continent, is two-fold. Number one, you're interested in the people vis-a-vis American people. And secondly, there's a business interest. And when you say the United States, the United States has to be thinking in terms of its citizens and what they're doing in these areas. And we have hundreds of Americans who are all over, as you know, in all kinds of businesses. So I would think, that there would be in the State Department an understanding of this and a pushing of the kind of climate that's necessary for this to take place, which they did in Africa. And I would assume that it grew from that. And the fact that they had a black over there didn't make any difference. Because the overall picture was handled through whites, because they were far in the majority. So you say, what is the American policy toward such and such a country, and this would be carried out by

whoever was there, who carried it out in parts of Africa obviously. But we were definitely in the minority in terms of the overall picture; we were just a drop in the bucket. So I would think that the United States government, through the State Department and through the other departments that were over there, moved on. I think we've been very successful, very successful in helping our people, in helping our national interests in these areas. We were just a tip on the water.

Q: One other thing of interest that just popped up out of the files. In 1963—I came across a document from 1963—which was promoting you as a nominee for ambassador to Nigeria. Were you ever approached about that in 1963?

DUDLEY: There was discussion about many of those things at that time. A lot of it was by individuals who were working in these departments and were not necessarily the initiators or the ones who made the final decisions. And there were some suggestions, some discussions and whatnot. Even when I wrote back to the State Department from time to time on leave, but none of it ever came to any fruition. And I never pushed any, because I never considered this to be my life's work or my career. To me, this was a stepping-stone. You must remember that I came through the NAACP, and I had taken a leave of absence, and I'm enjoying this on behalf in this one country for the United States. But always in the back of my mind I'm going back to take up my law work, and continue doing what I did. And there was never any thought in my mind of making this permanent, because it was too transitory. Who comes in as the next president or State Department chief, and then you're out and so forth and so on. In my mind, I was just lucky to be there on this one assignment, so far as I was concerned and my family. They came over and my son was very young, and at a certain time my wife said, “It's time to go home and put him in school,” and whatnot. So what do I do? I go back to my old job, and that's the whole story, with respect to me. And I didn't raise one finger to try to go anywhere on behalf of the State Department. Because I had assumed that if the next group came in were the Republicans, I wouldn't be going anywhere anyway. It was completely political.

Q: I overlooked one question about Liberia. If we can go back for just a moment. When you were promoted to ambassador in 1949, that meant that you were the only ambassador-level foreign representative in Liberia. How well did you work with the other nations' representatives there?

DUDLEY: Very well, very well. As I said, there was the British minister, who we met quite often. There was the French minister, Dechamps Graves (?), I remember his name; a very fine fellow. It just didn't make any difference, because I think I was chief of the diplomatic service even before I became an ambassador because of seniority and so forth and so on. I think it might have helped them, to push some of their missions up. But there was no difficulty. (Brief interruption by Mrs. Dudley). There was nothing other than, having been in this position as United States ambassador, we had no problems working. There was no animosity or anything toward them, or vice versa. The French, the British, the Lebanese, and one or two others who were there, we worked very well together. We'd have them over to our embassy, and we'd go to their place to have our various parties and whatnot. It was a very enjoyable life, very much so.

MRS. DUDLEY: The president liked him because he could keep up with his drinking.

DUDLEY: Well, that's probably true. We'd sit night after night and he'd have his scotch and soda set out, and we'd just sit there and enjoy ourselves, in the process of doing business and talking and whatnot. He was quite a guy; he was two-fisted though. William Shadrack(?) Tubman. But the other people had good representatives, too. As I said, the British minister, the French (unclear)—(?) Dechamps was his name. There were some very fine people. For such a small country they had some large countries of Europe and America represented there.

MRS. DUDLEY: There was a lot of money they could get out of there.

DUDLEY: Well, sure. A lot of them were in business there. The Liberian Mining Company, and the French were doing things and the British were doing things—opening stores and whatnot. Liberia was an open country, insofar as Africa was concerned. It was probably way ahead of Nigeria and some of the others around, even though they were bigger and later on became more successful because of the wealth. The mineral wealth throughout Africa was tremendous. You had diamond mines and all kinds of things.

Q: I had to admit that I was surprised. I knew about the Firestone operation there, but your reports coming back from Liberia about port building, and road building, and airfield building, and mines. It really sounded like the Old West, sort of a boomtown.

DUDLEY: Yes, and that brought people in, all kinds of people. And also brought some problems that you had to take care of. But we were there about five years and enjoyed it very much and probably made some little contribution. And after that we moved on to a new career. Which wound up in the courts; I was a judge for 30 years. So that was just a stepping-stone, so to speak. I was pretty young; there weren't too many young ambassadors in those days.

Q: No, that was a very young age at which you were chosen. I think that will just about do it then.

End of interview